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A ...VERN FOR A HERMITAGE

CLARENCE A. BUSKIRK

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A CAVERN FOR A HERMITAGE

BY
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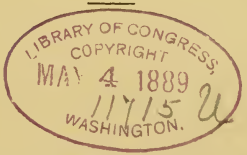
OF PRINCETON, IND.



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BY
CLARENCE A. BUSKIRK.

O, for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade!

COWPER.

Ah, what shall I be at fifty
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?

TENNYSON.

A CAVERN FOR A HERMITAGE.

Argument.—One who has been driven into the edges of misanthropy, retires to a wilderness; where, from day to day, he puts his ruminations into verse.

I.

I SUFFER, heart and brain,
In weariness and pain;
My soul faints, and I tire
Of all the sordid strife,
Day after day, in which I waste my life—
Toiling for nothing higher
Than that vile gold, for want of which the poor
Must give to carking cares
Youth, manhood, and gray hairs,
To scare the wolves of famine from the door.

I've sought the sylvan solitudes,
Where, far apart from all the noise of men,
Amid romantic woods
Streams wander through soft sunlight and sweet gloom,
Down the green hill and through the rocky glen;
And where the fair flowers bloom,
And happy birds sing to the capering leaves
A song that never tires and never grieves.
And there, (as in the days
Of careless boyhood,) I will sit and gaze
Around in idle freedom, with my head
Against the trunk of some gnarled oak wide-spread;
And there I'll hear the birds exalt their mirth
In music born alike of heaven and earth,
While graceful shadows in their hammocks swing,
Like gentle woodnymphs, where the wild flowers spring:
And there I'll watch the clouds

Drifting in stately crowds,
Like stately ships with banners streaming high,
Across the trackless ocean of the sky;
And blissful castles shall my fancies build
In those blue fields by mortal plows untilled;
While on the wave-like music of the birds
Shall drift my dreams too fair for mortal words:
And thus shall I forget
The present with its Gorgons of regret,
Its Satyr-like ambitions and despairs,
And all its Vulcan brood of limping cares!

II.

Dwellers beside the gutters never know
How beautiful the world in which we dwell.
The wondrous flowers that deck the grassy ground;
The happy streamlets murmuring to their banks;

The songs of birds like Ariels in disguise;
The blooming valleys and the stately hills;
The skies above us, with their azure space
Cloud-winged by day and starry-eyed by night;
The dwellers by the gutters know not these
As they are viewed in peaceful solitude.
The Dollar's mighty disk hides sun and moon:
The gem that glitters like a demon's eye,
While penury pines unheeded close at hand,
Feasts eyes that never heed a forest rose.
The fierce excitements of the menial street,
The vicious chatter of the gilded hall,
The mean ambitions of the day and night,
These dull the taste for field and wood and sky,
Until the dwellers by the gutters sink
In nobleness of motive and desire—
Their lives a fretful fever and low farce.

But dwarfed become the daily ills that vex,
The insect cares that pester and perplex,

Seen under the perspective of the stars
When Delphic night the infinite unbars.

III.

At last I've found a Hermitage,
From all the hives of men apart,
Deep in this trackless solitude.
How oft a poor, down-trodden heart,
Writhing and bleeding and despairing
Beneath the cruel feet of fate,
For some such refuge dreams and longs,
Away from guile and greed and hate!

A man among his fellow-men
Oft finds himself by wolves beset,
Whose hungry eyes torment his soul,
Whose teeth are with his life-blood wet:
At last he wearies of the strife,
And hates the vile, voracious herd;
He flees to Nature's outstretched arms,
And hears her voice in brook and bird.

True, men are born with social needs,
Gregarious both in blood and brain;
True, solitude with all its joy
Brings likewise bitterness and pain;
Yet to adjust the jostled scales
When rudely struck aside by wrong,
Is oft beyond a generous soul,
Such frauds and falsehoods round it throng.

A Cavern for a Hermitage,
From all the hives of men apart—
What fitter place where peace may reign,
And patience fortify the heart?
Ambition, Envy, Greed and Hate,
They perish in the solitude;
Their roots that midst the gutters thrive,
Can never there intrude.

A Cavern for a Hermitage,
From all the hives of men apart,
There trees and birds calm counsels give,
And grass and flowers protect the heart:
There wolves may howl or bears may
growl,

But men, at least, are far away;
There Peace, a mighty Inca, rules,
And Spaniards hold no sway!

IV.

One time, when traversing a solitude
Of rugged mountains and primeval groves,
I found this lonely Cavern. With awed torch
I pierced the darkness of colossal halls
Ribbed firm with granite, and adorned with gems
Which shone with all their marvels as I passed,
As 'twere some Genii's palace grand and vast.
My feet had followed the romantic tune
Of a blithe brooklet, half an afternoon,
When underneath a hill its crystal wave
Vanished, and showed the entrance to a cave;
Where, afterwards, I heard it pour along
Through mighty chambers with its gentle song.

Here shall my patient toil prepare a den
Among the beasts, and far removed from men:
And thus a refuge 'twill become for one
Who seeks the babble of the world to shun,
To hide in solitude the cruel smarts
False foes and falser friends oft deal to faithful hearts.

V.

A NEAR my Cavern is a lovely lawn,
An arrow's flight in breadth, whereon the trees
Have never made intrusion. There I'll delve,
Until the husbandry of patient days
Evokes a smiling scene of fruits and flowers.
Watching, from day to day and week to week,
The miracles of vegetable growth,

And the sweet things which Nature's
magic brush
Paints on the emerald earth above all art,
I'll feel, mayhap, the balmy hand of peace
Once more caress my soul as in my youth.
Tired and bruised souls, seeking the wilder-
ness,
(If moulded in a strong and generous
shape,)
From under the winking lashes of the stars,
From brawling cataracts and singing birds,
From timid ivy and majestic oak,
From sailing cloud and sudden thunderbolt,
From all the sights and sounds of night
and day,
Learn to adore the beauty of the earth,
And all the radiant majesty of space;
Learn that we errant mortals tread a globe
Worthy of adoration, and worthy, there-
fore,
To furnish all our lives with peace and
joy;
Learn to behold with patient charity
The pitiful passions of our sprawling race,

Which else inflame our hatreds and
despairs;
Learn to forget the swarms of insect cares
And stinging hopes and teasing vanities,
(Those parasites of spiritual disease,)
Which in the fetid atmosphere of towns
Once buzzed about me like winged masto-
dons.

Here may I stay the remnant of my life,
Far from the world with all its noise and
strife.
Gayly to climb the mountain solitudes,
To hunt the bounding deer through track-
less woods,
To angle in the joyous brooklets where
They dash in waterfalls through valleys
fair;
Thus may I find the buoyancy of health
Endowing me beyond all India's wealth—
For men of healthful blood are happy
men,
While oft a palace is a sick man's wretched
den.

The woful catalogue of maladies
Which rack the frames of men, until disease
And life appear twin-born, are all unknown
To the rude savage, while their crops are sown
Like plague-seeds in the marts of luxury.
The mental ailments, pale despondency,
And madness, and the nameless imps that toll
Their dismal peals across the hapless soul,
All these belong not to the mountain-side
Or the recesses of the forest wide.
Better to suffer the sharp penalties
Of nature's broken statutes, so to please
The senses with fictitious happiness?
Better to sin and suffer sin's distress?
Here, undisturbed by envy, pride, and hate,
One's wants how simple and one's joys how great!

Here, one may dwell as ignorant Adam dwelt
In peaceful Eden. Here, when tempests pelt,
I'll laugh at all the threats of wind and wave,
Within the granite chambers of this Cave.
Here, when the sky is calm and earth is glad,
My steps may climb the hills in beauty clad,
And find those buoyant joys of heart and brain
That dwell upon the hills. And, not in vain,
Through shadowy forests my adventurous feet
Shall seek romantic valleys lone and sweet,
Where hermit roses dwell, and mighty oaks
Welcome to their deep arms the elfin folks,

And where from caves, in which may
Titans dream,
Glides with soft music oft a white-lipped
stream.
Here, far removed from all the strife of
men,
I'll dwell in happy freedom in this glen,
Free from the sordid pride and greed and
toil,
Those vermin of the world which human
bliss despoil.

VI.

I have become a student of the sky,
Watching it through long hours of revery.
Before the day has dawned I often climb
An isolated peak that stands sublime
Near to the Cave; there pause, and view
the mist
Rise from the valleys, by the sunrise
kissed;
Its broad and lake-like fields serenely
spread
In winding gulfs about the islanded

Summits of pine-clad hills of smaller
height,
And windless seas beneath the moon of
night
Lying less still and cold; and watch the
beams
Flowing across the mist in silver streams
Till the mist breaks in foam against the
hills,
And glides away, revealing silver rills
And wakening woods and green and flow-
ery vales,
While gently rise the odorous morning
gales.

The clouds are wondrous things in all their
ways—
Whether like fleecy flocks they calmly
graze
Along the azure fields; or proudly sail
Like gallant ships before some upper gale;
Or stand like patriot mountain-chains of
snow,
With fathomless abysses cleft below;

Or pile in splendid domes and palaces,
Flushed with celestial colors numberless;
Or rove as precious argosies of showers,
Consigned to lovely ports of fruits and flowers;
Or battle high in heaven in awful wrath,
While Cossack lightnings hover round their path;
Or graceful rainbows magically form,
Smiling away the squadrons of the storm;
Or stretch in wondrous wreaths and diadems,
With stars at intervals like sparkling gems,
Wind-woven into light and argent lace
The maiden moon on summer nights to grace.

A single sunset hath more loveliness
Than all the boasted paintings kings possess.
Then Nature revels in most glorious mood,
Revealing powers which shame our feeble brood.

Take the rare moment ere the large sun sinks
Behind far hills and their mysterious brinks—
The sky then opens like a radiant rose,
Blooming beside a zenith where repose
White flakes and threads of vapor, and cloud-shapes
Of wondrous grace, and airy gulfs and capes:
Soon the whole sky becomes a molten sea
Of climbing fire and color; shadowy
Ravines receive the mantling streams of gold;
While marvelous scarlet hues, too manifold
And beautiful for human words to tell
Or thought to treasure, in bright billows swell
Up to the very edges of the blue;
And every instant splendors ever new
With still unfolding charms enrapt the view.

VII.

YOUTH quickly tires of calm retreats,
And loves the tumult of the streets :
Age loves the noise of peaceful rills,
But not the noise of babbling men ;
Age loves the stretch of quiet hills,
While mortared bricks fatigue its ken.

Youth fondly seeks the glittering strife
And gayeties of busy life :
Age seeks the balm of solitude
To heal the hurts the world bestows—
The balm that's found in lonely wood,
Or converse with a blushing rose.

VIII.

I FIND my instinct for companionship
Oft leads me to converse with other minds
Carefully chosen in my many books—
Minds incandescent in their nobler moods,
And happily shorn of all those paltry
traits

Which, when our comrades are in flesh
and blood,
Are smoke to hide their brightness from
our eyes.
The wounded spirit shrinking from the
world,
Which still may find companionship in
books,
Meets there high sympathies which solace
best
A wounded spirit in a generous breast;
For books are friends—when they are
worthy friends—
Whose comradeship a constant gladness
lends,
And there one meets from every land and
age,
Poet and wit, philosopher and sage.
The mind that journeys into realms ideal,
May oft forget the sorrows of the real;
The pen becomes the hand of Beatrice
Guiding us on through realms of joy and
peace.

Poesy, like a fair enchantress, waves
Her wand above the soul, and from its graves
New forms of beauty into being start,
With speech, before unheard, to move the heart—
A seraph, uttering from a mortal's hood
The soul-thoughts of the living and the dead,
Like a shell that murmurs of the sirens' bed,
Or the wierd sweet music in a haunted wood.

The Flowers of Thought with their divine perfume—
How shall we know the gardens where they bloom?
Their lusty roots what rich soil nourishes,
And feeds them with perennial loveliness?
What purer air and light their leaves disclose,
That they outvie the beauties of the rose?

Not on the hillside where the golden grain
Coquets till comes the scythe by which 'tis slain ;
Not where Anacreon-hearted bobolinks
Loiter in meadows till the warm sun sinks ;
Not in romantic woods where Dryads dream ;
Not fed by kisses of Arcadian stream ;—
Where nurtured, then, those fair, immortal flowers,
Strewing life's pathway like Idalian bowers ?
We find them in the strangest of all nooks—
Hidden within the pages of our books!
Mayhap, these Flowers of Thought which for us bloom,
Reach their deep roots to some forgotten tomb—
Where rolls the Nile, or Tiber's turgid tide,
Or Grecian skies o'er fairest lands preside,
Or stares the Sphinx in awful mystery,
Or drift the sacred waves of Galilee.

Mayhap, they lie unknown for centuries
Before discovered to far-sailing eyes,
Yet henceforth to our galleons evermore
They send rare perfumes from their Sabian shore.
Where'er they grow, in all our hearts they own
A Memnon's statue, giving forth its tone
Of marvelous music under the dawn's kiss;
And on the cloud-curtain hiding the abyss
Of matters infinite are seen their dyes,
Shining like starbeams from unfathomed skies.

IX.

In youth I trained my errant thoughts to climb
In springtime growth the trellises of rhyme;
And often now, by venting it in verse,
I save my soul the lava of a curse.

The world gives scant rewards to Poesy.
From sounding brass it turns its sordid face
Impatiently to hear a minstrel's voice—
Albeit a happy thought whose music beats
Against the lattice of a pent-up soul,
Shall live as long as hearts feel grief or joy.
But the true minstrel sings not for rewards—
He sings because the song is in his soul.
Poesy blooms as a spontaneous flower,
Whene'er it blooms at all, and fame or wealth
Add but false petals to its lovely growth;
Though they may give to cunning handiwork
Skilled counterfeits to cheat a careless world.
Poets are few, yet all at times are poets.
The heart that never felt poetic heat,
In some volcanic epoch or sweet spring,
Is a poor barren clod of earth indeed,
Where heavenly flowers ne'er climb through brier and weed.

Let sordid souls the Wingéd Horse despise
And count him of no value! Let dull eyes
Regard his wings with scorn, because their flight
Avoids the marts where Gold obscures the sight!
Those who have felt the rapture of his speed,
Grasping the mane of the Olympian steed,
Know that his glorious gallops have a worth
Beyond the gilded baubles of all earth!
What empery to ride the Wingéd Horse—
To leave all cares and sorrows and remorse
Of this dull earth beneath, and gayly skim
Along the heavens to their hill-girt rim;
And oft on chosen mountain-tops to rest,
Forgetful of mankind, and Nature's guest;

To swim on summer days above the heat;
To pierce the fleecy cloud-waves as they fleet
And find blue oceans on their farther side;
To distance the swift eagles in their pride,
And listen to the birds intone their notes
In blue abysses where no discord floats!
His feet may wander through a wilderness,
And lo, it shines with beauteous palaces;
May traverse desert sands or arctic snows,
And every hoof-print blossoms with a rose.

X.

Solitude is a pent-browed oracle,
And the sole nurse of deep and patient thought:

Her messages of truth are poorly heard
Where greed and folly spin their noisy tops.
The kindliest of the gifts of Solitude
Is the perfect key wherewithal Memory
To foot-sore souls unlocks her magic halls,
Wherein are hung the pictures of the Past.
Fairest among the pictures that are hung
Along the silent galleries of my soul,
This is the one, and most distinctly seen :—

Two sentinel oaks of reverend age, (whose green
And mighty tops stand close beside a lake
Where silver waves on banks of verdure break,)
Half hide from view the antiquated Cot
That lends an idyl to the lonely spot.
The windows are thrown open to the breeze
That loves the green abysses of the trees,

Its walls are fondled by romantic vines
Where many a flower its blushing cheek reclines;
And from the string-latched door a path descends
To where the lake its crystal circle bends.
Across the lakelet twice an arrow's flight
A rocky hill abruptly meets the sight,
And stretches upward into quiet woods,
Cleft with deep dells and lovely solitudes.

There the keen blood of boyhood swiftly sped
Through joyous veins; there with electric tread
The lithe form bounded, nimble as the fawn
That came to drink beside the lake at dawn;
There the round, silver voice rang sweetly out
In laughter and loud song and blithesome shout,

While health and vigor lent their ecstacies,
Flushed the brown cheeks and sparkled in the eyes.
Alas! we mortals were not born for ease,
To pass our lives in golden joys like these!
Alas! our fate ordains we toilers must
Confront life's pathway through a soiling dust—
To sweat, to toil, to tire, to sin, to sob,
As helpless items of a drifting mob!
Tell us, O Seers whose rhythmic voices bring
From life's hard rock full many a fabled spring,
Why all these passions, agonies and toils,
To win a victory that death despoils?
The answer cometh back, (like the sad tone
Of some old harp which perished hands have known,)
And murmurs that the gem of happiness
Sparkles not on the forehead of success,

But rather brightens with its mystic fires
The darkness where man labors and aspires.

XI.

Once I was young but now am old—
Ah! those brief words sound meaningless
To hearts not yet divorced by the stern code of fate
From youth and happiness!
But unto lives grown dark and cold,
(Like wintry fields barren and desolate,
Where once the grass was green and birds might mate,)
Ah! unto lives thus dark and cold,
What realms of sunless gloom those eight short words unfold!

Could all the priceless gems that shine
On princely brows be mine,
How quickly in a single draught of wine

Would I dissolve them all, if thus its flood
Might pour anew the buoyant blood
Of boyhood into veins grown stagnant with life's mud!

And yet, the draught could bring a bitter curse
Unless the graves might open, and their dead
Walk forth into the sunshine, and rehearse
The scenes that, like lost music, have forever fled!

A goddess that to youth is well-nigh dumb,
Memory, to age doth ever come
With lips benignly garrulous.
Her words invoke the spirits of the past,
And they with pleasing voices throng to us,
And sing of golden days that could not last,

Of loved and loving faces fled from earth,
Of scenes of happy mirth,
Of treasured kisses, words and smiles,
All blooming as perennial flowers in memory's halcyon isles.

Often my weary eyes, when lone I sit
Before my evening fire, see in it
The old log school-house underneath the hill,
Close to the withered hemlock from whose root
Gushed forth the crystal rill;
School comrades merry-faced and swift of foot;
The rooms in which I slept and ate and played,
And where my father knelt when mother prayed;
The droll-faced dolls in wondrous garments clad,
My sisters kissed when good and whipped when bad;

The pockets crammed with apples, pencils, strings,
Knife-handles, horse-shoe nails, and endless things;
The dog that barked, the cat that purred;
The latticed bird-cage, and its little bird
That always ate or sang whene'er it stirred;
The cock that crowed too early every morn;
The barn, the orchard, the tin dinner-horn;
The old red saw-mill, and the valley brook
Whose fishes were so shy of snare and hook;
The broad old elm that stood before
The gate, and often on wild winter nights
With shaking limbs would tap upon the door,
As through the window shone our fireside's warm delights.
And then the panorama moves along,
And leaves the realms of youthful laugh and song,

And shows the road where care and grief
and sin
To lurk like thieves and snarl like wolves
begin.
Swift and more swift the pictures move,
Save when the tearful eyes take notice of
Grass-covered graves, tresses of golden
hair,
And things that seem to speak like spirits
from the air.

Alas! for him who leans upon his staff,
The ghosts of long-dead years in his weak
moan and laugh!

XII.

Within my humble hall there hangs
against the wall
A fairer flower than summer garlands
know—
A beautiful old face, whose gentleness and
grace
Beam forth like winter flowers beside
the snow.

How calm the light which lies within
those dear old eyes!
How noble the sad patience of that
brow!
Those furrows which the years wore deep
with many tears—
Ah! how serene beneath life's sunset
now!

As on that face I gaze my fancy seeks the
days,
Long vanished, which her laughing girl-
hood knew;
I see the well-sweep move she oft has told
me of,
And forest paths her bare feet rambled
through.

And then my fancy strays to those roman-
tic days
When maidenhood built castles in the
the air,
And saw in bright day-dreams Idyllic
vales and streams

Where dwelt no sordid souls and all was fair.

Ah, beautiful old face, that brow was once the place
Where Cupid, the Olympian, had his reign;
Those furrowed cheeks have known swift bridal blushes blown,
Like fragrant flames, across their fair domain!

Alas! all now remains of years of joys and pains
Seems pictured in that face upon the wall!
Alas! that life should bloom so nigh the fatal tomb
Which in its voiceless darkness buries all!

Constant and faithful friend, within these lines I send

My greetings to thee whereso'er thou art;
For like a thornless rose thy lovely memory grows
And blossoms at the gateway to my heart!

XIII.

I may no worthy picture draw of her,
For want of worthy words. When artists stir
Their paints to mimic the transcendent dyes
A gorgeous sunset pours across the skies,
I think their souls must faint and timid grow.
I have no words her loveliness to show,
As on the canvas of my soul I see
Her maiden charms in their sweet empery
Of heavenly eyes, fair forehead, rosebud mouth,
Cheeks delicate yet blooming like the south,

Brown hair all flecked with light—such
as the sun
Once in his loom for fair sea-maidens
spun,
And form as graceful as a dream in stone
Chiseled when goddesses on earth were
known.

XIV.

Brown eyes and brown hair,
White pearls in rose lips,
Neck graceful and fair
As the sailing in air
Of summer cloud ships.

Thoughts sweet as the rose
The sunrise hath kissed,
Speech sweet to its close,
And sweet laughter that flows
Like morn through the mist,

XV.

More sweet than the mountain's echo
Of horns on the neighboring lake,
Was the love in my darling's voice
As it answered back my own;
More soft than summer stars
On sleeping waters sown,
Was the love in my darling's eyes
Which answered the love I spake.

Like a timorous bird her hand
Was nestled in my embrace,
(How soft and warm it was!)
And the darkness of her hair,
(Where a wild-rose sweetly bloomed,)
Was lit by moonbeams fair;
And the balmy night-wind loitered
About our trysting-place.

We had wandered up a valley,
Beside a truant stream,
While a summer afternoon
Distilled its golden hours;

Our hearts with love were freighted,
Like our hands with blushing flowers;
And life to us seemed an Eden
Worthy a poet's dream.

The sun had lowered his bucket
Of liquid light in the west,
And the moon in the east was lifting
Her bucket of flowing gold,
And the oak above us rustled
Its leafage overbold,
As on her beauteous lips
Love's virgin kiss I pressed.

Love is a flame that burns
Like a star's sky-cradled fire;
And shines with its fairest lustre
When earth, like a timid nun,
In darkness veils herself
From the glances of the sun;
And each pillar of cloud becomes
A pillar of bright desire;

Then, under Love's charming magic,
All the nobler legends writ
Deepest upon the heart,
(Those legends for which our lips
Never learn but a broken language,)
Come forth from their eclipse,
With all their stellar meanings
Like phosphorous darkness-lit.

XVI.

Our living wishes are unquiet waves
That, driven by winds and tides, forever flee
And find no place of rest beneath the skies,
Our buried wishes oft have shallow graves,
And upward from their darkness mockingly
Thrust fleshless hands to flout our startled eyes.

XVII.

Lithe as a leopard in his limbs and walk;
Tall and broad-shouldered like an ideal
prince;
His curling locks auburn and plentiful;
His large eyes dark and smiling; his frank
face
Noble and care-free; in the bloom of
youth;
Such is the vision that besets my brain
This afternoon.

Hastily up a street
That merges in a dusty country-road
He strides—the healthful air painting his
cheeks
And warming his young blood like balmy
wine.
True, his rough garments are threadbare
with age;
True, in his coat collapses a lank purse
Which careless wants have sucked like
leeches at;

True, only homely toils employ his arm,
To guide the plow, or reap the ripened grain;
True, humble joys and simple aspirations
Content the healthful hunger of his soul:
But what all these save trifles, when his heart
Is pure, honest and robust, and sweet health—
The goddess most divine that smiles on youth—
Affords him transports which no gold can buy?
True, he is yet obscure, with life's strange battle
Unfought before him, wherein he may fall,
Or slowly sicken from defeated hopes;
Yet who would not prefer youth with its strength,
Its banquets of delight still to be tasted,
To all the music that the trump of fame
Can blatter forth to mock her favorites?
Alas! how soon the dew deserts the flower!

XVIII.

The Minstrel of Meudon stood where the tide
Of a city poured most strong and wide,
(A tide that surges beneath the sway
Of its yellow planet both night and day.)
Across his face the wounds of thought
Their scars and furrows had sternly wrought,
And Titan-like in his cavernous eyes
Were symbols, dreams and prophecies.

The busy and gay swept past the spot
Where he stood—and heeded the Minstrel not,
For his cloak was poor and his frame was bent
With age and sorrows. His life he had lent
To the search of nobler things than are sold
In the sordid marts of power and gold:
So the vulgar scorn of the rich and great
From him provoked but a smile sedate.

What cared he for their pomp and power,
Those empty bubbles that burst in an hour?

As he stood and watched the human tide
With its dregs of squalor and froth of pride,
A funeral train swept slowly by,
Foolish with sable pageantry.
As the minstrel looked, a wayward thought
To his face a shadowy brightness brought;
And he seized his harp, with a curious scorn,
And its music rose like the blast of a horn.
Swift faces of wrath were turned to him,
As if to rend him limb from limb;
But his fingers struck the strings apace,
And the scornful smile still kept his face.
Then soon the minstrel's mighty art
Revealed its empire over the heart;
For the lowering faces softened down,
And the smile and the tear followed the frown.

While the pall-bearers paused, forgetting
to pass,
And the monks neglected to mumble their
mass.

But now what strange caprice is this,
Or doth the minstrel play amiss?
A merry tune to which might dance
Fays and elfins where moonbeams glance,
Floats from his harp on the wondering
air
So sweet as to banish all grief and care;
And the bald-pated monks keep time, toe
and heel,
And the pall-bearers join in a rollicking
reel.
But while the Minstrel of Meudon hath
shown
To the gaping crowd his sceptre and
throne,
The smile hath slowly left his face
And a weary frown usurped its place;
For all this time his mighty art
Hath not been used for so idle a part

As to study what already he knew—
What follies monks and mourners can do:
The sad-eyed minstrel hath only played
For that breathless dust in the coffin laid;
And he saddens to know that while his strings
Yield him an empire o'er living things,
All his skill is but baffled and impotent breath
When it crosses the Sphinx-like presence of Death!

XIX.

It was morn; and through the bars of my window came a bird,
Singing a song so sweet that a golden sunbeam heard
And followed into the gloom to listen, rapture-still
Save when the beech outside trembled to some soft trill.

Before the singing had ceased, beneath
some spell most strange
Into a happy bird my dream had made me
change;
And out of the window we passed, the bird
that had sung and I,
And flew to a snow-white cloud that was
drifting through the sky.

Through a portal in the cloud my guide
and I then passed
Into a realm so dark that sleep soon held
me fast;
And I cannot tell how far the cloud had
made its flight
Ere I wakened from the sleep whose bonds
had held me tight.

Then, lo! I wore no longer the tiny
bird's disguise,
But stood in my own stature with wonder-
widened eyes;
And heard such wondrous sounds and saw
such wondrous sights,
That their recollections serve me a ban-
quet of delights.

I stood within a valley in some delicious land,
Where like wine to cheer the blood were the breezes blowing bland;
Where a soft, romantic light on the flowers and verdure fell
Like the glances of a virgin when they hold us in their spell;

Where, at intervals, soft sounds across the silence drifted
With surprises that were sweet as rosy lips uplifted;
Where everything about me was so beautiful and rare,
I fancied some Aladdin's lamp had wrought the wonders there.

I sang like a village boy when through the woods he rides,
As I wandered through the valleys and up the green hillsides;
Yet I marvelled that no beings like mortal men seemed there,
Though I heard sweet peals of laughter and soft voices everywhere.

All suddenly I saw my Darling's form and face
Before me, like an angel of loveliness and grace:
I ran with outstretched arms to clasp her then and there,
But she faded while I followed in rapture and despair.

Yet she gave a kiss of love, wafted from her finger-tips,
More precious than the kisses bestowed by mortal lips;
And she sang a low farewell as from my longing sight
She faded, as a ship fades from the shore at night.

XX.

Sometimes I conjecture our souls are darkened by the wings
Of events whose swift approach we thus are taught to know.

Our prescience may be sure, though based
on mystic things
Governed by mystic laws. Many shad-
ows above us go.

Have I heard the mystic sound of the
dreaded Stygian stream?
If so, I soon shall have solved, or cease
the weary strife
Of seeking to solve, the problem o'er
which Death sneers at Life.
Lives my Darling beyond the grave? or
did I dream but a Dream?

XXI.

In vain, in vain, in vain! Why strive
aside to tear
The dark and mighty veil that drapes the
realms of air?
'Twould seem all codes of faith—let them
be true or false—
Belong to a realm where Reason puts off
his crown and halts.

Why not quaff in verdant valleys what
pleasant streams may flow?
Why seek their mountain sources through
solitudes of snow?
Why not bask like butterflies among the
random flowers?
Why vex our little wings in search of
fancied bowers?

XXII.

That unknown thing within us we try to
call a soul,
And famish on the threshold of such a
barren word—
By what mysterious powers are its sea-
like billows stirred,
What tidal influences its restless waves
control?

We see the lights and shadows across its
surface blown,
And behold it as a mirror where images
are thrown:

But hid are its coral walls and adamantine towers,
Where monsters are at home and sirens make their bowers.

Though our thoughts leave earth beneath, like the carols of a lark,
Is there ever when "heaven peeps through the blanket of the dark"
To spy our mortal ways? or, are we like bubbles which rise
From seas that witlessly mirror the meaningless void of the skies?

Are we made like the crawling worms and only a finer clay?
Is night the infinite womb, and her finite child, the day?
Or, are truths which shine with the brightness of suns that never set,
And hid because of the mists our darkful hearts beget?

All about us are riddles, unsolved because
they cannot be solved.
Our senses are doors to darkness where
man in his stupor winks.
The Past is a burial desert where scowls
an inscrutable Sphinx,
And the future an ideal cloud-land in law-
less mists involved.

We teem with a thousand marvels, and so
does the grass at our feet.
We gaze at the stars, and we feel we are
ants pushing globes of clay.
The portals before us open along our
groping way,
But the portals keep closing behind us.
And human life is fleet.

Let man look into his soul and he finds a
looking-glass,
Curiously twisted and warped in number-
less crooked ways;
Its surfaces constantly changing beneath
his hectored gaze,
And from heaven and hell alike the images
which pass.

In those convex and concave mirrors,
(where falsehood dwells alone,
And peril in too much gazing—for madness may come of it,)
In garments of motely hues demons and angels flit
Distorted, dilated, or dwarfed, and never truly shown.

Drifting, drifting, drifting, my mind is a rudderless ship
Tossed on a shoreless sea. Can anyone tell the trip
On which he was launched at his birth? For such fogs what compass avails?
Why not go where the sirens are singing and struggle no more with the gales?
Better a crown of straws and a silly sceptre of lath,
If so the monarch be happy within his haughty cell,
Than a digger of thoughts whose roots reach down into torture and wrath—
Than to strive with unsatisfied thirsts like Tantalus in Hell!

Mad? Let the wiseacres find a single
soul that is sane!
The spiders of madness weave their cob-
webs in every brain?
A crazy and credulous crew, whose com-
pass to ruin dips,
We sail on yawning seas, with foolish joy
on our lips,
And always magnet-mountains arise to
wreck our ships.

XXIII.

Hast thou seen those pictures of Centaurs?
Why, thou art a Centaur thyself;
And the beast is thy greater part, and thy
swifter part as well!
Dost thou claim to guide the beast? Then
somewhat reflect, and tell
If the beast be not thy master and thou
but an impotent elf?

XXIV.

I sneer at my own baseness! O, I scorn
The universal baseness of mankind!
I loathe my very self that I was born
Of such a race of dogs and wolves in mind!
Thou Desert, welcome with thy scenes forlorn!
The soul is not all wretched when resigned!
Henceforth, the pains which rack me shall be borne
In all the exhaustless strength of silent scorn:

Let the storms beat of Fate and Circumstance—
Her fiercest shafts let hostile Fortune fling—
I rise above them all. In sufferance
Patient and strong, I trample like a king
Under my heel all the vile things of chance.
The soul is its own master, and to bring
The soul to its own mastery is to gain
The sceptre of the world and break its chain.

In vain! in vain! My heart is wrapt in gloom,
Whose murky horrors a dread chaos seem
Of hopeless blight and ruin. From the tomb
Of years whose memory is a mocking dream,
I hear an awful oracle of doom.
Horrors and horrors throng, and darkly stream
Like hungry harpies o'er me. Rend and tear—
Endurance is the offspring of despair!

Existence, at the best, is but a curse;
Pleasure a sleeping adder; happiness
A gaudy plume that waves above a hearse.
Vanity, vanity, woe and bitterness
Compose the draught we drink. The things we nurse
Drive thorns into our hearts with each caress,

And sicken with their perfumes. Vain, vain, vain!
The slaves of fate we drag a poisoned chain!

XXV.

Who knows but these hanging-gardens which are the land of our dreams,
Will become the home where our spirits will bask by the flower-banked streams?
Who knows but the passing waters of earthly cares and pains,
(Which are flowing forever by but never empty their beds,)
There will form peaceful lakes encircled by emerald plains?
And these hardest of couches turn softest —the hands that hold our heads?

XXVI.

Behold the blazing log of sturdy oak,
How soon 'twill vanish in its shroud of smoke—

But, therefore, doth the acorn sprout in vain,
Warmed by the sun and nourished by the rain?
Cans't tell us what its destiny may be?
To buffet the wild billows of the sea?
To shine in motley paints in purse-proud halls?
To fall to earth and perish where it falls?
Moulded from dust which soon is dust again,
Thus vain and transient seem the lives of men—
The longest life, upon time's shoreless sea
But a poor bubble of frivolity—
Humanity an all-devouring dyke,
Through which the generations ooze alike,
Alike for all the darkness unexplored
Before and after where the stream is poured.

Lives man no more? Ends all within the grave?
Is there no Heaven to seek, no Christ to save?

Is life a curse, the gift of cruelty ?
Man but a storm-tossed ship upon a sea
Without a port that's worth the toil to
gain,
Worthless his struggles, all his wisdom
vain ?
Are good and evil only empty cheats ;
Our noblest victories our worst defeats ?
Is human progress but a gilded curse,
Guiding our hapless race from bad to
worse ?
Religion to the rescue ! Not fierce creeds,
Beneath whose sway the martyr burns
and bleeds ;
Not some illogical and monstrous dream,
To make the infidel triumphant seem ;
But rational and universal Love,
Worthy of man below and God above !
Polluted and despoiled by priestly rule,
Trampled beneath the hoofs of ridicule—
Still it lives on in its perennial bloom,
To justify the cradle and the tomb !

XXVII.

A desolate island in a desolate sea—
A desolate island with no greenery
Of grass or flowers or trees to make it fair,
Nothing save drifted sands and rocks piled bare.
It seemed a shoreless sea, whose billows rolled
Sullen and listless, like a bosom old
In anguish, when it slowly heaves and sinks
In some new woe from which in vain it shrinks.
An awful storm arose ; the sea and sky
Were mingled in deep darkness; loud on high
The thunders shook heaven's arches; through the gloom
Demoniac lightnings shot their bolts of doom.
At last the chaos ceased. Serene and bright
Shone forth the sun, and radiant flowers of light

Adorned a rainbow's graceful arch that hung
Across the sky, the scattered clouds among.
Beneath the arch I saw a mystic face,
Fair beyond words; and, in a little space,
I heard a voice speak soft as dream-words flow—
"Hope waits on high for him who waits below."

XXVIII.

Foretold by prophet, priest and bard,
By sign and portent heralded,
The true Messiah came and bled,
And yet mankind knew not the Lord.
The true Messiah came to earth—
Not as a kingly conqueror comes,
In jewelled pomp and noise of drums,
But a lone manger gave him birth.
Poor fishermen composed the band
With whom he moved in humblest guise;
Nor wealth nor greatness reached his eyes,

Nor sword nor sceptre stained his hand.
He saw the strutting Cæsars pass,
He saw the parasites of power,
All as the insects of an hour,
Or flitting shadows on the grass.
Unlike all other princes born,
He valued not what men most prized;
So Gentiles doubted and despised,
And Jews and Romans laughed in scorn.
Not less the radiance of the flame
Because too pure for mortal eyes;
Not less a radiance from the skies
Because men looked through mists and shame!
Whatever comes to men or man
Of blessings that beget no curse,
Making all better, nothing worse,
From inmost unto utmost span,
Must come as comes the modest shower
The gentle breeze, the nightly dew,
As comes the morning from the blue,
As comes the crimson to the flower.
The light of the Messiah's birth,
A quiet daybreak in the sky,

Still as the centuries go by
Broadens its radiance round the earth.
No threatening swords of Moslem hosts,
No frightful gifts on Pagan shrines,
No awful menaces and signs,
The true Messiah's kingdom boasts.
Its laws, pacific and benign,
Are warm with sunlight from above;
Its messages are words of love
And gifts of peace and joys divine.

XXIX.

"Existence, at the best, is but a curse,"
Those words I wrote of late, are they all truth,
Or, only one half truth and one half worse?
As falsehood's rabid froth, I had in youth
Denounced them, each and all, those words I wrote.
But I have deeply sinned, and sin hath left
Its curse upon my soul; and hate hath smote
Mine idols into dust. A frightful theft

Against one's life, with hand upon one's
throat,
Sin must commit, before one stands bereft
Like that of trust in God and in one's
kind,
A Sampson in life's temple, shorn and
blind!

XXX.

Only in dreams our Castles of the Air
Are built above the heavy fogs of care;
Only in dreams De Leon's fountain flows,
Where pain and age can wash away their
woes.

The flower of happiness can only bloom
Where virtue tills the soil and love abides;
It may be in the bright and festive room,
Or in the hut where poverty resides.
Its beauteous petals open and perfume
No spot because wealth pours her golden
tides,
Or fame or fashion wield their gilded rods,
Or power forgets the vengeance of the gods.

XXXI.

I SPECULATE if part of my fierce gloom
Might still be swept aside with laughter's broom?
For laughter is a broom to sweep the brain
Of many of its webs of care and pain:
And men should not disdain to look well after,
What the Olympians loved, blood-rousing laughter.

Grief is a bat that loves the darkness best,
And far from noise and sunshine builds its nest:
Get the heart stirring once with nimble blood,
And Grief soon elsewhere rears its dusky brood.
Go out and breathe the sparkling atmosphere—
The gods' champagne that gives celestial cheer;

Shake off the stupor of thy spirit's pain,
As the lion shakes the dewdrops from his mane;
Be not like barnacles upon a log
Drifting at lazy random through a fog;
Nor absent-minded like an amorous spark
When winking at his sweetheart in the dark:
A giant when he first emits his moan
Is smaller and weaker than a dwarf when grown;
So griefs which might be strangled at the first,
Are into grisly monsters quickly nursed!

However deep the ills of life may prick
Our feet like cruel thorns; however sick
Our hearts may turn to view a sterile waste
Whose niggard streams have all a brackish taste;
Yet is it not weakness, wickedness and folly,
To cringe to fate in moping melancholy?

Oft griefs are harrows for the soul which fit
Its soil for crops of wisdom, worth and wit;
And hearts are clay which need the clouds and rain,
As well as sunshine, or they bear no grain.
Yet are there those of fortunes so serene,
No storms disturb the sunshine of the scene,
Who still contrive a peevish irrigation
By brewing tempests in imagination:
Better a dancing dog, whose gravity
Of pendent paw and melancholy eye,
The tragic pantomime and fictile game
Of all such puling puppets put to shame!
Even for him whose grief is stern and real,
Not some mere phantom idle and ideal,
'Tis proof of senile weakness to bewail,
If strength be left to fight the pelting hail.

XXXII.

'Tis true that I have had sufficient cause
For railing at my kind, yet broken laws
Are predecessors of most punishments.
I own 'tis true that in remote events
Of boyhood and of manhood frequent guilt
Upon my wayward soul its darkness spilt.
A young man's soul is like a pleasure-ground
Where colors flaunt and merry fiddles sound;
An old man's soul a house gone to decay,
Too oft with bats by night and owls by day:
And when the springs of innocent cheerfulness
Are choked by guilty riot or excess,
An old man's soul then boasts no verdant lawn
Whereon the sunset emulates the dawn.
Vices and follies when they're nursed by men,
Are like the eggs hatched by the foolish hen,

For they are serpents' eggs which, soon
or late,
Shall wreak upon us their envenomed
hate.

XXXIII.

Am I a cynic? I hope not. To-day,
By chance I looked upon a boy at play.
The dog that in a mirror stops to stare,
And growls as if some other dog were
there—
That is the cynic. Yet the crabbedest
cur
That growls whene'er canine adults dare
stir
Within his presence, will, when puppies
play,
Like a kind czar his terrors put away,
And amiably unbend his awful frown.
So, when a child tugs at an old man's
gown,
And pulls his hair and clutches at his knee,
Then April sunshine warms his heart, and
he

Forgets to be a cynic for the while—
Such is the genial power of childhood's smile.
A frigid mien may be a lying mask ;
Oft the soul's wine is in a frozen cask,
The balmy excellence with which 'twas filled,
In potent richness at its core distilled.

XXXIV.

Sometimes I weary of my hermitage—
For discontent belongs to human hearts,
As weeds belong to gardens. The king wearies
Of crown and sceptre, and ofttimes would barter
A principality for a peasant's cottage ;
The peasant wearies of his humble hearth,
And for the splendid emptiness of wealth
Oft like a fool, would barter home and wife ;
The merchant wearies of his bulging ledgers ;

The statesman of his power and stratagems;
The lawyer of his cobwebs, quips and quirks;
The sailor of his floor upon the waves;
The doctor of his perilous boluses;
And all would welcome at such times a change
To novel scenes and aspirations strange.
Sometimes my fancy paints me wondrous tales—
Of whiskered captains, of adventurous sails,
Of splendid cities, of high feats of men,
In the far world beyond this narrow glen.
Alladdin and the genii of the lamp,
As told round campfires of an Arab camp,
Ever delight the dwellers of all lands,
Just as they charm the nomads of the sands:
But stranger than the wildest Orient dream,
The miracles of modern progress seem,

Save as familiar uses blunt their charm.
Did ever the Orient dream of a cunning arm
Reaching beneath wide seas to distant shores;
Of ships that journey without sails or oars;
Of iron muscles skilfuller than hands
And taught in all the crafts of all the lands?

Alas! too well I know what bitter lore
Close contact with our fellows has in store,
To teach us that despite the marvelous things
Which lend to human progress magic wings,
Heads are no wiser, hearts no purer grown,
Than those the ancients knew in ages gone.
While, probably, the greatest ancients knew
Catarrhs and colics as we moderns do,

Played in the dirt when children, and
when men
Oft found themselves all smeared with dirt
again;
So, while the earth grows older every day,
Men still are moulded from the self-same
clay,
Swayed by the passions, appetites and
whims
Which Adam felt and every Homer limns.
The dwarf that on a giant's shoulder rides,
Sees farther than the giant he bestrides.
Like the dull boor who at a stranger
stares
And judges of him by the coat he wears,
So men are prone to reason on events
Not from essentials but from accidents.

XXXV.

I HAVE noticed a turkey-cock distend with
the wind of pride,
And his haughtiness of step like a silly
lordling's stride;

I have noticed his feathers stiffen like the
arrogance of a snob,
And his tail unfold like a fan in the
clutch of a female nabob.
Alike vainglorious we, at this nineteenth
century's close,
When we prate of our boasted land and of
other nations' woes.
True, our cities are crowded with traffic,
our thoroughfares glitter with gold;
True, our pageants far outshine all the
pageantry of old;
True, on every side we see the marvels of
thought and toil
As they blossom in freedom's sunshine
and grow on freedom's soil;
But this is not enough. It is man, not
his handiwork,
Which makes the essential odds betwixt
the Christian and Turk.
If the man be ignoble, what good that he
rides in a palace-car?
If the man be base, he is base though his
opulence shine afar.

We are worshippers of idols and Mammon
is our false God,
So have broken the Lord's Command-
ment and must walk beneath his rod,
If we look to the east or west, if we look
to the north or the south,
We bow to some golden image and wor-
ship with heart and mouth;
We are taught to despise the beauty and
grandeur of things ideal—
Except, forsooth, they are bond-slaves to
things that are sordid and real;
We are taught that Dollars are better
than Thoughts that enoble the soul,
That the man who has wealth and power
—though a wretch—has reached life's
goal;
We bend our knees to the Rich, though
vile as the vilest weed,
And glance with scorn at the Poor, though
noble in thought and deed;
We raise our hats to Success, and ask not
what road it came,
Though its chariot-wheels still smoke from
the gutters of crime and shame!

Not strange, we are dwarfing in manhood
and swiftly becoming small-souled,
Better trained for a nation of thieves than
the Spartan youths of old;
Not strange that our statesmen turn rob-
bers, that demagogues rule the State,
That gold has mastered the ballot and
bribes swerve the nation's fate!
How else, how else could it be, O turkey-
cocks thoughtless and vain—
So big in your strutting feathers, so dimin-
utive in brain?
You are only barnyard fowls walking the
filthy ground;
You are tamed, and cannot fly into the
blue profound.

XXXVI

I STOOD and saw a slow ship sailing in,
Whose lonely path across the seas had been:
I looked on every sorrow, age and sex,
Among the exiles swarming on her decks—

The old man with gray locks and tottering staff—
The bright-eyed boy with music in his laugh—
The home-sick matron, with her long-drawn sigh—
The graceful girl with moonlight in her eye—
The patient peasant with athletic arm
To greet the honest toil of shop and farm—
All these, abandoning their native land,
I saw approach Columbia's welcome strand,
Grief in each heart, hope kindling every eye,
To seek new homes beneath an alien sky.

Alas! the shadow of the tyrant's rod
Had blighted the fair thresholds where they trod;
And robbers with long titles for their masks,
Stolen the wages of their wretched tasks,
Leaving no good they ever could attain,
Save hopeless lives of penury and pain;

While far across the ocean their dim eyes
Had pictured all that life could realize—
The blessed liberty to till the soil,
And reap the harvests springing from their toil—
The blessed right to labor, and aspire
To every good ambition may desire—
An equal law and every man his own,
The wicked insolence of rank unknown.
But, as the sun has spots upon its face,
So do all evil things and things of grace,
In this strange world, of which so small we know,
So odd unite and so together grow,
That surely what is evil, what is good,
Is never easy to be understood:
And thus it is to view the crazy tricks
Of the strange whirligigs of politics—
The subtle schemes with disappointments fraught—
The bubble honors bursting soon as caught—
The rancors, jealousies and dark designs—
The fierce assaults, the mines and countermines—

The humbugs practiced with a saint-like
leer—
The hollow friendships and the hates sin-
cere—
In short, the hordes of rascals great and
small,
Who, wolf-like, fatten upon those who fall,
And who, like foul fish dripping from the
brine,
Shine while they rot and rotten while they
shine!
I cannot stop to view the whole arena's
Menagerie of serpents, wolves, hyenas,
Tigers, sharks, monkeys—now and then a
lion—
Which Uncle Sam is called to keep his
eye on;
I only marvel as I look around,
His stripéd pants are still above the
ground!
Millions of partisans con well each word
Whene'er the voice of leadership is heard;
And though it drip with folly and deceit—
It matters not—a million tongues repeat;

Just as a hungry parrot will rehearse,
To get his meal, a sermon or a verse.
He who would thrive in politics must first
Bury his manhood as a thing accursed—
Must study prudence and neutrality,
Must smile by habit, blush not at a lie—
Extend a cordial hand to rogues and fools—
Consent to be enrolled with servile tools—
Like weather-cocks obey each wind that blows—
Like rotten sticks float as the current flows—
And then—if not too honest or too wise—
With decent luck debility will rise.
O Patriot few, with duties to perform,
Acting as faithful pilots in the storm,
Braving whatever perils may assail,
Scorning the hardships of the fiercest gale—
O noble Few, disdaining things of self,
Toiling for country, not for place and pelf;
You, as your guerdon for each lofty aim,
Suffer ingratitude and hate and shame!

XXXVII

And why not I? Why should I hide and shirk,
When kind and country all need honest work?
To arms, my soul! rouse from thy slothful spleen,
And seek thy duties with heroic mien!
Unless I prove my readiness to give,
What right have I to ask? what right to live?

True, different men need difference of pursuits,
Just as to different trees are different fruits;
True, swine for acorns always hunt the oak,
While oft by man this obvious law is broke;
True, the world sees beneath a chancellor's wig
The frequent noddle of a brainless prig—

Finds if some doctors swallowed their own
pills
Their fate would save their neighbors
numerous ills—
Beholds a pulpit turned into a pound
By some stray ass of most ungodly
sound—
True, I may blunder likewise, or may
fail,
Or merely pound the air with worthless
flail—
But, there is work to do for every man,
And he fails not who does the best he
can.

XXXVIII.

Poverty's face looks grim and hard and
cold,
Yet it is poverty makes the world rich.
Men must be poor or else they will not
toil,
And if men cease to toil the world must
halt,

The cities crumble and depopulate,
The mills and markets close, the harvest-fields
Return untilled to primal wilderness,
And nakedness and famine like gaunt wolves
Glare at all doors. Not wealth, but poverty,
Forces the complex wheels of social life,
And moves the hands around the clock of Progress.
The nine must toil, or else the ten must starve:
Should then the nine complain because the tenth
Escapes his share? Or should the tenth, the drone,
Despise the busy bees that fill the hive?
The poor man's envy and the rich man's scorn
Are equal folly, equal blasphemy.
Doth the kind Providence that paints the flower,

And stores the lands and seas with fire
and food,
And belts the earth with verdure for her
flocks,
In everything omnipotent and benign
So blunder in the synthesis of man,
The sovereign favorite in the universe,
That Poverty is made the common lot,
And yet a curse to all the sons of toil?
Nay: indolence, the pale-face child of
wealth,
Bred listlessly in leisure's languid lap,
Seems born to the cradle of young Her-
cules,
Beset with serpents, but without the
strength
Of Hercules to strangle and subdue!
Because the wholesome wines of inno-
cence
Seem guarded by the keys of poverty,
For their excitements, wealth and indo-
lence
Seem driven to vice and folly in all
climes;

The sons and daughters born to opulence,
Seem born upon a maelstrom's placid edge,
Without a port for which compelled to sail,
With selfishness their compass, with caprice
The wayward pilot of their heedless voyage,
Drifting along with music on their decks
And insolent colors and wild merriment,
The grim-jawed vortex hidden from their sight.

All hail to Toil, though rugged and uncouth!
All hail to Poverty, though cold and grim!
Hail to the Son and Mother! It is they,
And only they, who evermore redeem
The world from hunger, thirst and nakedness:
'Tis they who bear the shields of law and order:
'Tis they whose fingers rub Aladdin's lamp,

While nations swarm across the continents,
And splendid cities as by magic rise:
'Tis they capture the lightnings from the clouds,
And harness them as servants to the earth:
'Tis they whose hands scatter upon the seas
The sails of commerce, like the prodigal hand
Of autumn scatters leaves upon the winds:
'Tis they who send the thoughts and words of men
Beneath the surging seas from land to land;
Who fill our homes with music, works of art,
And all that soothes the careworn souls of men,
And all that educates, subdues, refines!
Hail then to Toil, and hail to Poverty,
The Son and Mother, who redeem the earth
From barbarism, anarchy, despair!

XXXIX.

Behold the hill-born brook,
So brightly pure and sweet,
Leaping from rock to rock
With the sunshine on its feet;
But when it halts on the plain,
Lazy and motionless,
Then slime and filth profane,
And wriggling ugliness.
And such is the stagnant soul;
And down in its sombre deeps
Vile thoughts like monsters roll,
And Death like a horror creeps.

Behold how a bugle's blare
Pours music into the blood,
'Til it leaps like a thing of air,
Disdaining its banks of mud:
Then even the coward's clay
Shamefully torpid and cold,
Melted in battle's ray,
May fill a hero's mould.

But the sluggard is doubly damned,
Both body and soul grown dull,
Like a ship that lies becalmed
'Til the elements rot her hull.

XL.

A Cavern for a Hermitage,
From all the hives of men apart—
'Tis a fit place for beasts to rage,
But not a human heart!
Farewell, O crabbed Solitude,
For scenes of busy life!
Again I'll quaff th' elixir brewed
Only 'midst toil and strife!

XLI.

Farewell, O thou beautiful wild-rose,
Dew-freshened and kissed by the sun;
Farewell, O thou innocent child-rose,
Mine eyes have alone looked upon!

I shall leave thee as lover leaves maiden
When belting his sword for the foe!—
May the winds treat thee kindly when laden
With odors thy lips shall bestow!

Be genial, O skies, in adorning
This virgin so lovely and sweet!
O ye robins, sing blithely each morning,
This guest of the forest to greet!

Thou dweller within this green wildwood,
Sweet saint in thy convent apart,
Like a song or a laughter from childhood
Thine image I'll bear in my heart!

FINIS.

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